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Department of State

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BRAZIL

INCOMING
TELEGRAM

PAGE 01 BRASIL 01379 182208Z
ACTION ARA-16

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BRASIL 01379 182208Z

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 INR-10 SS-15 CIAE-00 ICA-11 DODE-00
H-01 NSC-05 NSAE-00 SY-05 HA-06 L-03 PM-07
PA-01 DCT-02 SP-02 SR-04 SPRS-02 /091 W
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R 182030Z FEB 81
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9708
INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN

GUARD AGAINST A SMIRCH ON THEIR HONOR -- ARE ACUTELY SENSITIVE ON THE MATTER OF TORTURE AND DETERMINED THAT THEY WILL NOT BE CALLED TO ACCOUNT LEGALLY OR MORALLY FOR ACTS COMMITTED DURING WHAT THEY CONSIDER A STATE OF WAR. IN ADDITION, THE STRONG REACTION CAN BE VIEWED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PERIODIC GENERAL WARNINGS ISSUED BY THE MILITARY TO THOSE WHO WOULD EXPLOIT OR ABUSE THE EXPANDED FREEDOMS GRANTED BY ABERTURA.
SAYRE

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E.O. 12065: GDS 2/18/87 (HEINECK, CAROL) OR-P
TAGS: PINT BR
SUBJECT: BRAZILIAN MILITARY DENOUNCES TORTURE ACCUSATIONS

1. (U) THE BRAZILIAN MILITARY REACTED WITH FORCEFUL PUBLIC DENUNCIATIONS LAST WEEK TO ALLEGATIONS WHICH THREATENED TO OPEN UP TO EXAMINATION ACCUSATIONS OF ACTS OF TORTURE BY THE MILITARY DURING THE 1970'S.

2 THE EPISODE WAS TOUCHED OFF BY FORMER POLITICAL PRISONER INES ETIENNE ROMEU WHO IDENTIFIED THE LOCATION NEAR RIO OF THE HOUSE WHERE SHE CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED AND TORTURED FOR THREE MONTHS IN 1971. IN ADDITION, A MEMBER OF THE BRAZILIAN AMNESTY COMMITTEE ACCUSED THE MILITARY OF TORTURING HIS SON IN 1971, CITING A PROMINENT ACTIVE-DUTY ARMY COLONEL AS THE OFFICER RESPONSIBLE.

3. (U) THE MILITARY REACTION TO PROMINENT PRESS REPORTING OF THESE CHARGES CAME QUICKLY WITH PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY THE ARMY, NAVY, AND AIR FORCE MINISTERS DENOUNCING THE REPORTS AS "MALICIOUS INNUENDO AND DELIBERATE DISTORTION" IN A CAMPAIGN TO "DENIGRATE THE IMAGE OF THE MILITARY" AND TO "DISCREDIT THE ARMED FORCES IN THE PUBLIC OPINION." AIR FORCE MINISTER DELIO JARDIM DE MATTOS CONCEDED IN HIS STATEMENT THAT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM THERE WAS VIOLENCE AND INJUSTICE ON BOTH SIDES. HOWEVER, HE AND THE OTHER MINISTERS WERE UNANIMOUS IN CONDEMNING EFFORTS TO DREDGE UP PAST HISTORY WHICH THEY CALLED THE UNPRODUCTIVE VENGEANCE OF A FANATICAL FEW. THE MINISTERS' STATEMENTS WERE READ IN FULL ON THE NATIONWIDE TELEVISION NEWS BROADCASTS AND PRINTED IN ALL LEADING PAPERS. OTHER MILITARY FIGURES QUICKLY RALLIED BEHIND THEM AND ENDORSED THEIR CALL FOR A HALT TO WHAT THEY PORTRAYED AS A CAMPAIGN OF "REVANCHISMO."

4. (U) COMMENT: ONE OF THE PRECEPTS OF ABERTURA -- ACCEPTED BY ALL MAJOR POLITICAL ELEMENTS -- IS THAT ABUSES BY SECURITY FORCES DURING THE PERIOD OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE WILL NOT BE SUBJECT TO LEGAL INVESTIGATION OR OTHER SYSTEMATIC SCRUTINY. INDEED, TO INSURE THIS, THE 1979 AMNESTY LAW WAS DRAFTED EXPLICITLY TO EXONERATE BOTH SIDES INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT OF THE LATE 60'S AND EARLY 70'S. IN KEEPING WITH THIS APPROACH, LAST WEEK'S STATEMENTS BY THE ARMED FORCES WERE ENDORSED IN PRINCIPLE (IF NOT IN TONE) BY THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPERS AS WELL AS BY LEADING OPPOSITION POLITICIANS. TANCREDO NEVES, PRESIDENT OF THE OPPOSITION POPULAR PARTY SUMMED UP MUCH OF PREVAILING COMMENT BY WARNING THAT THE COUNTRY HAD A DIM FUTURE IF IT INSISTED ON

DELVING INTO ITS PAST. IN THIS CLIMATE, MANY OBSERVERS FELT THAT THE MILITARY REACTED WITH A VEHEMENCE OUT OF ALL PROPORTION TO THE ACTUAL DANGER THAT ITS MEMBERS MIGHT BE LINKED TO OLD OFFENSES. IT MUST BE BORNE IN MIND, HOWEVER, THAT THE ARMED FORCES -- ALWAYS ON

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